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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: MOROCCO POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS

REF: A. RABAT 1646

[B](#). RABAT 1118

[C](#). RABAT 1584

[1](#)1. (U) THIS MESSAGE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

Table of Contents

- King Mohammed VI Presents Vision for African Development
- Spanish Foreign Minister Visits Morocco
- Polisario Invites Spanish NGOs to Western Sahara
- Europe to Send Humanitarian Aid to Sahrawi Prisoners
- Ali Salem Tamek Leads Hunger Strike
- Prison Sentences Reduced for Laayoune Rioters
- Demonstration in Sidi Ifni Dispersed
- Multiple Drug Seizures across the Country
- Illegal Immigration Successes

----- KING MOHAMMED VI PRESENTS VISION FOR AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT -----

[1](#)2. (SBU) In an address on August 5 to the Asilah International Forum of Culture read by Royal Cabinet member and Palace insider Mohamed Rochdi Chraïbi, King Mohammed VI outlined a vision for African development, emphasizing in-depth structural reform and respect for the sovereignty of states, the official Moroccan news agency Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP) reported. The King emphasized indigenous growth through internal reforms focusing on modernizing institutions, developing sustainable human resources, and promoting democratic reform. He also called for development through cooperation among African nations rather than reliance on abroad. The King hailed the importance of regional economic groups, such as the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), but emphasized that African states must protect and respect sovereignty as well as "unanimously reject balkanization and separatist movements." The King's message made very clear that respect of sovereignty was key to the success of any regional economic bloc, likely referencing the current deadlock of the UMA resulting from the dispute between Morocco and Algeria over the Western Sahara. The Asilah International Forum of Culture, an annual conference held in FM Benaïssa's seaside hometown, runs from August 5-19. This year the conference's focus was on Africa with the intent of bringing participants from all over Africa into dialogue. However, it has been criticized by both embassy officers and press sources as being poorly organized.

----- SPANISH FM VISITS MOROCCO -----

[1](#)3. (U) Spanish FM Moratinos visited Morocco as part of the Asilah International Forum of Culture on August 6, according to MAP. While in Morocco for his second annual appearance at the Asilah Forum, Moratinos met with Moroccan FM Benaïssa and in a statement afterwards, urged the UN to find a quick solution to the Western Sahara dispute. Moratinos went on to say that Spain is willing to "fill the gap" left by the departure of former UNSYG personal envoy, James Baker. In addition to his statement on the Western Sahara, Moratinos called on the Spanish people to overcome their stereotypes of Moroccans and work toward mutual understanding through "cultural, human, and political exchange." Moratinos' statements come shortly after an open letter he had published (Ref A), which criticized those pressuring the Spanish government to side with the Polisario in the Western Sahara conflict.

----- WESTERN SAHARA -----

[1](#)4. (U) Polisario Invites Spanish NGOs to Western Sahara: Polisario representatives in Madrid invited a number of Spanish NGOs to the Western Sahara to "witness violations committed by Moroccan occupying forces" according to a August

11 report from the Arabic-language daily Al Ahdath Al Maghribia. The Polisario specifically mentioned the cities of Laayoune, Dakhla, and Boujdour in their message aimed at NGOs sympathetic to their cause, particularly in the Spanish region of Galicia.

15. (U) European Aid for Sahrawis in Tindouf: The European Commission granted 9.3 million Euros of humanitarian aid to Sahrawis in the Polisario-controlled Tindouf camps in Algeria according to the French-language daily l'Economiste on August 11. The aid is intended to improve the living conditions of those in the camps and will be coordinated by the European humanitarian aid agency ECHO. The European Union has granted 108 million Euro to Sahrawis in Tindouf since 1993.

16. (SBU) Ali Salem Tamek Leads Hunger Strike: Pro-Polisario human rights activist Ali Salem Tamek as well as five other jailed human rights activists began a hunger strike on August 2 in protest of the conditions surrounding their detention, MAP reported on August 6. The six are being held on charges relating to the large May demonstrations in Laayoune (Ref B). Tamek has been detained since July 22, and began the hunger strike to protest his "kidnapping" and transfer from the local Laayoune prison to the Ait Melloul prison (near Agadir in southern Morocco), according to a August 8 report in the Arabic-language daily Al Ittihad Al Ishtiraki. Two of Tamek's colleagues were moved to a Casablanca prison on August 2 while three remain in Laayoune, the Arabic-language daily Al Ahdath Al Maghribia reported on August 10. The Laayoune Appellate Court prosecution states that all six are in Laayoune and has rejected Tamek's claims, stating that he has been provided his rights under the law. Tamek has a history of run-ins with the government, having already spent time in prison two other times since 1993. (Embassy Comment: It is interesting to note that the demonstrations Tamek is alleged to have incited began with the transfer of a Sahrawi from the Laayoune prison to a prison in Agadir. End Comment)

17. (U) Prison Sentences Reduced for Laayoune Rioters: The criminal chamber of the Laayoune Court of Appeal reduced the sentences of ten people convicted for their actions during the large May demonstrations in Laayoune according to a August 6 report of the English-language daily Morocco Times. Two other prisoners associated with the demonstrations had their sentences reduced by the criminal chamber of the Laayoune Court of First Instance. These reductions in sentences follow previous reductions of sentences related to the May demonstrations (Ref C) that had initially been as high as 20 years.

DEMONSTRATION IN SIDI IFNI DISPERSED

18. (SBU) Police in Sidi Ifni (province of Tiznit) broke up a group of demonstrators calling for the improvement of social services, new roads, and more jobs in the region on August 7, according to various media sources. The details of the demonstration remain disputed, with the number of participants ranging from 1,000 to 30,000 as well as questions over whether the demonstration actually was dispersed or needed to be dispersed by police. However, a press release from an NGO coalition in the region claimed that 30,000 people participated, and that they will continue to hold demonstrations as long as "the legitimate claims of the population are not met." Polfsn noted that the NGOs in this region of Morocco are particularly popular, well organized, and well funded, largely by European NGOs and remittances.

NARCOTICS

19. (U) Over Two Tons of Hashish Seized in Agadir: Customs officials in Agadir seized over two tons of chira (hashish pollen powder), according to an August 6 MAP report. The drugs were hidden in plastic bags packed in five kilo olive cans in a container bound for Germany. Police have begun an investigation to identify the drug traffickers.

10. (U) 178 Kilos of Hashish seized in Nador: Customs officials in Nador seized 178 kilos of hashish from a van bound for southern Spain according to a August 12 MAP report. The driver, a Moroccan-born Dutch citizen, was turned over to the Nador police for prosecution.

11. (U) Eighteen Kilos of Hashish Seized in Casablanca: Police in Casablanca arrested a man in Casablanca with 18 kilos of chira as he was collecting money from smaller dealers in the area, according to an August 9 report from the French-language daily le Matin. The arrested man is suspected of being part of a wider drug operation, which has operations throughout the Casablanca area and gets its supplies from the Ouazzane region.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION SUCCESSES

112. (U) The Maghreb Arabe Presse reported a number of successful operations to apprehend illegal immigrants and dismantle the networks that transport them. The Ministry of Interior reported that between August 1-7 authorities apprehended 262 illegal immigrants in operations across the country. Additionally, on August 10 the Royal Gendarmerie intercepted 30 would-be illegal immigrants bound for Europe off the coast between Larache and Asilah. On August 9, police in Larache dismantled a separate illegal immigration network, arresting its boss. The Navy also apprehended 57 would-be immigrants off the coast of Al Hoceima. Thus far in 2005, around 7,600 illegal immigrants have been arrested, the bulk of them from sub-Saharan African countries.
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